

SURVIVAL OF GEOGRAPHY EDUCATION IN A COVID-19 PRONE SOCIETY

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic is an unanticipated phenomenon that has exposed human fragility in an interconnected and interdependent world. While impacts are of a global magnitude, the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic has also brought unprecedented educational disruption which has hampered the smooth teaching and learning of geography education in our school system. This was as a result on the restriction on movement and close association to avoid the spread of the disease. Using the critical analysis, the researcher discovers that the only strategy for the survival and continuity of Geography education is through online learning shifting from traditional systems of learning to digital platforms.

Keywords: Geography, education, COVID-19, online learning

Introduction

In December 2019 a novel corona virus (COVID-19) was detected in Wuhan, China and has since spread around the world. COVID-19 is an illness caused by a novel corona virus called severe acute respiratory syndrome corona virus 2 (SARS- CoV-2; formerly called 2019-nCoV) which was first identified amid an outbreak of respiratory illness cases and uncontrollable death cases. The disease spreads from person to person through infected air droplets that are projected during sneezing or coughing. It can also be transmitted when humans have contacts with hands and surfaces that contain the virus and touch their eyes, nose, or mouth with the contaminated hands. High transmission rate and serious health consequences have forced countries to introduce measures to reduce community transmission of the disease (Anderson et.al.2020). Various countries have implemented policies, one of which is isolation, by the separation of sick people with the infectious diseases from the uninfected people to protect people who are not infected. To fight COVID-19, the Government has prohibited people from the crowding around, social distance, wearing masks and always washing their hands.

The spread of the COVID-19 disease caused by the corona virus does not only have impact on social and economic life but also has an impact on the world of education. Lots of countries have issued lockdown or quarantine policies that have an impact on schools. As a result, children and teenagers were restricted in order to curb its spread. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) noted that pandemic covid-19 has impacted on the education of about 300 million students worldwide. Up till now, the spread of the virus is still a critical concern. COVID-19 has changed the conventional face-to-face learning system into a distance learning system or online method. Its effect is felt in schools across the different subjects. Narrowing it to Geography education, COVID-19 has made its teaching and learning difficult. Therefore the only solution to continuity of the teaching and learning geography education is through online learning.

There is no doubt that the introduction of e-teaching and e-learning will tremendously contribute to the advancement of the Geography education and the educational sector will only survive if online learning will be introduced to the curriculum for Geography education.

Background knowledge on Covid-19 Pandemic

On January 30, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) announced that this outbreak had constituted a public health emergency of international concern (Mahase 2020). The novel corona virus was initially named 2019-nCoV and officially as severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARSCoV-2). As of February 26, COVID-19 has been recognized in 34 countries, with a total of 80,239 laboratory-confirmed cases and 2,700 deaths (WHO 2020). According to recent research of Viral Etiology, similar to SARS-CoV and Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV), SARSCoV-2 is zootoxic, with Chinese horseshoe bats (*Rhinolophus sinicus*) being the most probable origin. Majority of patients experienced fever and dry cough, while some also had shortness of breath, fatigue, and other atypical symptoms, such as muscle pain, confusion, headache, sore throat, diarrhoea and vomiting. Currently, the approach to COVID-19 is to control the source of infection; use infection prevention and control.

The first case of COVID-19 was reported in Nigeria by the Federal Ministry of Health on 27th February, 2020. This was the case of an Italian citizen who working in Nigeria returned from Milan, Italy to Lagos, Nigeria. Since then, the number of confirmed cases of infection kept rising both on Nigeria and around the globe. It led to the closure of schools which caused serious drawbacks for learners and deprives them of their right to education and positions them to future risk. Now, school has resumed in Nigeria but the cases of its victims keep increasing in other countries. There is need to provide a remedy (which is e-teaching and e-learning) for the continuity of Geography education since the pandemic is still prevailing and has tendencies of returning back.

Understanding the concept of Geography education

Geography from the Greek word *geographia*, literally "earth description") is a field of science devoted to the study of the lands, features, inhabitants, and phenomena of the Earth and planets. Geography Education is the branch of education or a discipline that seeks an understanding of the earth alongside the human and natural complexities not merely where objects are, but also how they have changed and come to be.

Geography Education is often defined in terms of two branches: human geography education and physical geography education. Human geography education is concerned with the study of people and their communities, cultures, economies, and interactions with the environment by studying their relations with and across space and place. Physical geography education is concerned with the study of processes and patterns in the natural environment like the atmosphere, hydrosphere, biosphere and geosphere. (Uhlenwinkel A. etal 2017)

According to Lambert, D., Solem M. and Tani S. (2015), Geography Education is a systematic study of the Universe and its features. Traditionally, geography has been associated with cartography and place names. Geographers study the space and the temporal

database distribution of phenomena, processes, and features as well as the interaction of humans and their environment. Because space and place affect a variety of topics, such as economics, health, climate, plants and animals, geography is highly interdisciplinary. The interdisciplinary nature of the geographical approach depends on attentiveness to the relationship between physical and human phenomena and its spatial patterns. Geography teaching is also about providing young people with the skills that help them fit into the demands of an increasingly globalised economy. There is the argument that geography education is at its best when it enables young people to ‘discover’ themselves, perhaps in a unique and unusual setting. Geography education gives students the opportunity of understanding concepts and ideas. It is also about developing the intellectual structures which young people need to understand and progress in their learning.

Online learning as a platform

Online-learning is a learning system based on formalized teaching but with the help of electronic resources. It can also be seen as a network enabled transfer of skills and knowledge whereby the delivery of education is made to a large number of recipients at the same or different types. Online-learning is an interactive learning system that provides the learner with the use of communication and information technologies and depends on an integrated digital electronic environment that displays courses across electronic networks, provides guidance, organises tests as well as managing and evaluating resources and processes. Online-learning involves learning and utilizing electronic technologies to access educational curriculum outside of a traditional classroom. In most cases, it refers to a course, program or degree delivered completely online. In this cognitive process for achieving knowledge (Learning), technology plays an enabling medium, just like any other tool in the education praxis.

Online learning is the learning that uses an internet network with accessibility, connectivity, flexibility and the ability to generate various types of learning interactions. The internet is one of the most important technologies in today’s society. The use of online learning applications for education is increasing alongside the increasing use of the internet.

For online lectures to be carried out optimally to achieve the geography education learning objectives, online learning media are needed that can facilitate students and lecturers. Various choices of communication media can be used by students and lecturers so that teaching and learning activities can continue to run including Face book (FB), WhatsApp (WA), You-tube (Ytb), Flicker (Flc), Instagram (Ins), Twitter (Twt), Google classroom, Skype. In addition, the application of online-learning can use the Learning Management System (LMS). LMS is a web-based technology that makes it easy for users to create and deliver content, monitor teacher participation and engagement and rate their performance online. This applications contain features that can facilitate prospective teachers and lecturers to interact with each other such as hold discussions, giving and doing online quiz, and accessing learning materials anywhere and anytime as long as they are connected to internet. Online learning connects students with learning resources (databases, experts/instructors, libraries) that are physically

separated or even far apart but can communicate, interact and collaborate directly/synchronously and indirectly/asynchronously (Taylor, L. 2008).

Theoretical and Practical Aspects

The use of information and communication technology (ICT) in higher education has grown markedly. In many universities, online course materials are now used to support traditional based learning. In some cases courses are delivered entirely online while others provide complementary support in the form of learning materials, learning activities or course documentation. E-learning is used to describe a wide range of approaches to ICT supported learning. Geography is well suited to the use of e-tools for learning. Geographers have constructive approaches to problem-based learning (Bagoly- Simó, P., 2020).

There are different theoretical and practical aspects for geography education using online platforms. They include: Audio-visual high-tech (more of observations and charts demonstrations and mathematical calculations to handle the map reading and chemical combination of rocks and hydrology - these need a direct show than mere theoretical presentations a form laboratory tests), Visual-contact aids like Zoom and applications like Technologically Support Learning, and Audio-Visual High Tech. Free learning site provides free online practical learning materials and tools for learners and teachers. The future lab also supports applications like Savannah, a strategy-based game where a virtual space is mapped onto a real space. Again, University of Leicester site provides a rational for e-learning. Data repositories and e-library are also relevant for the teaching and learning of geography.

The experts should design the teaching-learning activities through social medium platforms such as Google Classroom which is a free web service that is developed by Google for schools that strives to simplify creating, distributing and grading assignments in a paperless way with the purpose of streamlining the process of sharing files between lecturers and students. *WhatsApp* which is freeware, cross-platform, messaging and voice over IP service as well as *Facebook* should be employed. This allows users to send text messages and voice messages, make voice and video calls and share images, documents, user location and other media. We also have *Zoom* which is a video communication that provides video telephone and online messaging services through a cloud-based peer-to-peer software platform that is used for distance education and social media. *Blog* is an online journal or information website used in displaying information in a reversed chronological order with the latest posts appearing first. It is a platform where a writer shares his/her view on many concepts. All these will maintain the social distancing rules, help the teacher to teach, reach out to learners through voice, written words or even video conversation.

Conclusion

The primary purpose of this paper is to advocate for the inclusion of Online learning to Political Science Education in primary schools, secondary schools and tertiary institution curriculum. It principally highlights on e-learning as a platform that should be integrated into

the schools' curriculum. This establishes a justification for geography education as an online course in our education system. I strongly believe that it is imperative that the students are carried along on geography education using online platforms in relation to COVID-19. This paper thus argued that the only strategy for the survival and continuity of geography education is a transformation from traditional systems of learning to online learning using digital platforms.

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